

Statement of William H. Swift, Airport Concessionaire, BTS Inc.

“Access Control Point Breaches at Our Nation’s Airports: Anomalies or Systemic Failures?”

**House Committee on Homeland Security Subcommittee on Transportation Security - May 16,
10:00 a.m. - 311 Cannon House Office Building**

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, and Members of the House Homeland Security Subcommittee on Transportation Security, my name is William Swift, a principal at Business Traveler Services, Inc. (BTS). BTS is a privately-held concessionaire based out of Atlanta, Georgia. I thank you for the opportunity to participate in today’s hearing and would like to discuss some of the issues that concessionaires like myself face on a regular basis in the airport security arena.

As a concessionaire, I am as concerned about airport security - as are all those who travel daily through nearly 400 U.S. commercial airports. A breach of security that leads to a major incident significantly impacts the traffic and business for *all* airports and for all of us who have businesses at these airports. As part of my testimony, I would like to make three suggestions for the Committee and Transportation Security Administration (TSA) to consider:

- 1. Raising the SIDA Badge Allocation Limit:** I ask the Subcommittee consider raising the 25% allocation limitation or implementing a reasonable ‘minimum’ allocation that would allow small businesses to successfully operate in the airport arena.
- 2. Ensuring a Consistent Delivery Process:** I recommend that the Subcommittee look at ways to ensure the delivery process is subject to consistent security standards that do not unduly inhibit the ability of small concessionaire to compete and do business.
- 3. Ensuring Consistency in the Processing Timeline for New Hires:** We must be able to depend on a consistently timely response from the TSA/airport, and I ask the Subcommittee to examine methods to ensure consistency in this process.

SIDA Badge Privileges

My comments today are focused on the impact of the allocation of identification badges with SIDA badge privileges for concessionaires. It is particularly difficult for those of us who are small operators on airports, having as few as 1 – 3 locations, and as a result as few as 6 – 12 employees. Imposing a 25% limitation on the total number of employees permitted to be issued a SIDA badge suggests that only 1.5 – 3 employees may have a SIDA badge. This limitation is arbitrary at best - and not based on facts relative to the procedures and practices by which we are required to operate in an airport environment. The hours we operate, more often imposed by the airport, 12 – 17 hours per day, require that at least two complete employee teams per day seven days per week be on site. A company needs opening and closing personnel, as well as floaters to address a variety of circumstances, i.e. repairs requiring an escort, product deliveries, replacing employees who call in sick or late. The mathematical equation applied here does not work.

Under one contract I have in the Atlanta airport, we provide a number of products and services via vending and/or mechanized units. Our company operates this array of machines through three partners/principals, a full-time maintenance man and a clerical assistant. We all have to pitch in to keep our company in-step or ahead of the customer service demands. The arbitrary

number of SIDA badges permitted is stifling to the small operator who, through necessity of the Homeland Security proportioned allocations, is being forced into a 'one size fits all standard' that cannot work when it comes to the small operator. Amongst ourselves, we have asked rhetorically, why does TSA view our business group as a higher risk to the security of the airport?

I recommend the Subcommittee consider raising the 25% allocation limitation or implementing a reasonable 'minimum' allocation that would allow small businesses to successfully operate in the airport arena.

Inconsistent Handling of Deliveries

Another area of concern is the inconsistent handling of US postal, UPS or FedEx packages. Small operators frequently do not maintain an off-airport warehouse for a 1 – 2 store operation and, therefore, must rely on UPS or FedEx deliveries. Some airports permit deliveries by these companies to post security stores, while others do not permit these deliveries. The impact is significant and costly for a small operator, possibly requiring that they must hire additional personnel and vehicles to be available on standby for these deliveries that can only be made and transported across the tarmac. Small operators cannot financially absorb the additional costs and remain profitable.

I recommend that the Subcommittee look at ways to ensure the delivery process is subject to consistent security standards that do not unduly inhibit the ability of small concessionaire to compete and do business.

Inconsistent Processing Timeframe for New Hires

Additional impact on the small operator is the inconsistent timeframe to get new hires through the TSA/airport badging process. Typically there is a 10 – 14 day processing, but it has been as long as 30 days. Considering that many of our new hires can ill-afford to wait several weeks to get an approval, resulting in the loss of potential employees *and* the fees we were charged by the airport for processing them.

We must be able to depend on a consistently timely response from the TSA/airport, and I ask the Subcommittee to examine methods to ensure consistency in this process.

Conclusion

I thank you for allowing me to share my experiences as an airport concessionaire with the Subcommittee. I understand the careful balance between maximizing security while also ensuring business can still operate successfully and efficiently, and I appreciate the work both the Subcommittee and full Committee have done in this area. Should any Members of the Subcommittee have any questions for me today, I am happy to provide my insight and will answer your questions to the best of my ability.